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Addendum

Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit

SUMMARY

In 1998, UNDP contributed to the preparation of five reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) through its direct inputs as well as through its inputs and comments via the machinery of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. The five reports were: (a) fellowships in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/98/1); (b) more coherence for enhanced oversight in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/98/2); (c) the United Nations University: enhancing its relevance and effectiveness (JIU/REP/98/3); (d) United Nations common system services at Geneva - part I: overview of administrative cooperation and coordination (JIU/REP/98/4); and (e) United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS): broader engagement with United Nations organizations (JIU/REP/98/5).

The present report summarizes the general scope of the JIU reports of interest or concern to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and highlights recommendations of particular relevance to UNDP, noting the comments made by UNDP to the final reports and indicating any particular points for consideration by the Executive Board.

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report.

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JIU/REP/98/1 Fellowships in the United Nations system

Scope

1. The objective of the report was to identify major management and coordination issues relating to the implementation of United Nations system fellowships programmes and the contribution of these programmes to capacity-building. After an overview of United Nations system fellowships programmes, the Inspectors came to the conclusion that agencies should adopt a uniform format on reporting, based on a common definition of fellowships that focuses on quality, relevance and impact. While the contribution of fellowships to capacity-building was difficult to assess, as acknowledged by previous evaluations, measures to foster the use of former fellows' expertise were called for.

Recommendations of interest to UNDP

2. Recommendations 2 and 4 refer, inter alia, to the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa (UNETPSA). Recommendation 2 calls for the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Administrator of UNDP and with Member States concerned, to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session an evaluation report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/131 of December 1995, which, inter alia, extended UNETPSA as a distinct operation for three to five years beyond April 1994, and on the need to maintain UNETPSA as a separate Programme with an expanded geographic coverage. Recommendation 4 calls for the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Administrator of UNDP and the host country, to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the possibility of UNETPSA being given a new mandate to capitalize on its experience and serve as a common system placement and supervising mechanism in southern Africa.

Comments by UNDP

3. As called for by the JIU recommendations, an in-depth evaluation of UNETPSA is being undertaken with a twofold scope: (a) to determine the impact of the programme on human resources development in South Africa and (b) to assess the role that UNETPSA could play in the field of tertiary education and training in the southern Africa region and beyond and its potential for attracting additional resources.

JIU/REP/98/2 More coherence for enhanced oversight in the United Nations system

Scope

4. The objective of the report was to increase the effectiveness of oversight in the United Nations system for both individual organizations and system-wide. The report concluded that as a shared responsibility of Member States, secretariats and external oversight mechanisms, oversight is important for the continuing process of change and reform under way in the United Nations system. There have been ad hoc and incremental efforts to strengthen oversight in the United Nations system that have had some effect on a number of organizations,

but which have not addressed the lack of coherence in the oversight infrastructure of the United Nations system and even have added to it. There is Member State discomfort or dissatisfaction with the current results of oversight in the system and concern about a blurring of the classical roles of internal and external oversight, internal oversight being held accountable to Executive Heads and external oversight to Member States. There is great diversity of structure and conduct of internal oversight in the United Nations system. The report calls for a common understanding of oversight throughout the system. Neither a single unified oversight mechanism for the United Nations overall nor an identical internal oversight model for all organizations would be practical or desirable. The report notes that organizations could learn from each other through more active identification of good practices and by making oversight reports a means for disseminating information about good practices throughout the United Nations system.

Recommendations of interest to UNDP

5. The report recommends, inter alia: (a) legislative organs to request Executive Heads to submit, for approval, an optimal plan for conducting and coordinating all elements of internal oversight appropriate to the characteristics of his or her organization and an indication of the related personnel and financial requirements; (b) legislative organs to request Executive Heads to submit a consolidated annual summary report on internal oversight activities; (c) the inclusion of a description of good practices in internal and external oversight reports to legislative organs; (d) a periodic overall analysis by the JIU of the consolidated annual summary reports of the internal oversight activities of the United Nations system as a whole, for the purpose of identifying system-wide issues and problems as well as good practices possibly beneficial to other organizations of the system; (e) seeking, through current associations, United Nations system oversight mechanisms to encourage further networking, information-sharing and professional development; and (f) enhanced dialogue by oversight mechanisms with Member States and secretariats so as to be more responsive to concerns about oversight, foster the role of oversight in the reform process and promote better understanding of the roles of the different oversight mechanisms.

Comments by UNDP

6. In chapter VI of Executive Board document DP/1999/23 on internal audit and oversight activities, UNDP provides detailed comments on the above-mentioned six recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and recommends that the Executive Board may wish to take note of the UNDP response to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/98/2 - A/53/171). Document DP/1999/23 should therefore be read in conjunction with the present document.

JIU/REP/98/3 The United Nations University: enhancing its relevance and effectiveness

Scope

7. The report was prepared as follow-up to the analysis of the United Nations University (UNU) in the Programme of Reform proposed by the Secretary-General

(A/51/950) and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolutions 52/12 A and B of 12 November 1997. The objectives of the report were to make UNU an integral part of the United Nations renewal process; to explore ways by which its potential could be realized more fully as a strategic intellectual resource for the multilateral system of cooperation; and to strengthen its adaptability to the emerging or uncharted challenges of the next century.

8. The report identifies the following weaknesses at UNU: (a) the lack of a system of clear priorities and the absence of a coherent programme framework for the UNU system as a whole; (b) ineffectual institutional coordination within the UNU system and with the United Nations system; (c) ineffective dissemination of research outputs; (d) inadequate financial resources; (e) the absence of a solid administrative management framework or manual for the University as a whole, including an established personnel management policy.

Recommendations of interest to UNDP

9. Among the key recommendations of the report are: (a) the Secretary-General should take action to make UNU a full-fledged member of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, with a view to enhancing interaction and collaboration in programme matters between UNU and other organizations within the United Nations system; (b) the General Assembly may wish to consider the possibility of adding UNU to the list of organizations eligible for participation in the United Nations Pledging Conference; (c) the formulation and implementation of a unified publications policy and programme for UNU and targeting dissemination activities more deliberately and systematically to United Nations system intergovernmental policy and normative processes; (d) less emphasis should be placed on the establishment or incorporation of new research and training centres and programmes in favour of an expanded and active network of associated institutions; (e) UNU should concentrate its limited resources on activities with a global and interdisciplinary dimension; (f) UNU should give priority to academic capacity-building in developing countries and reduce overall meetings costs by making more effective use of information and communications technologies.

Comments by UNDP

10. As an entity of the United Nations, UNU does attend the plenary of the Administrative Committee on Coordination when agenda items require it. However, for the coordination of the programme the Inspectors call for a more important step, namely, for UNU to participate fully in the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ), where UNU could interact with other system partners in both the key programme issues of relevance to the system, such as poverty eradication and the follow-up to United Nations conferences, as well as operational issues, such as the resident coordinator system. The recommendations on relying more on associated institutions rather than expanding the UNU network of research centres and programmes is very much in line with the trend towards a better division of labour among internal and external development partners throughout the United Nations system so as to avoid duplication. Global and interdisciplinary issues do indeed appear to be the comparative advantage of UNU. The priority to academic capacity-building is very much in line with the call for enhanced capacity-building emerging from

General Assembly resolution 53/192 of 15 December 1998 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities and would complement the activities of operational development entities of the United Nations system in this area. Regarding UNU and the Pledging Conference, it would be interesting for UNU additionally to observe the innovative funding initiatives being undertaken by the funds and programmes such as the funding session of UNDP at the second regular session of its Executive Board. Among the lessons learned by UNDP were that many major donors were not in a position to pledge during the annual Pledging Conference because of the timing of their budget cycles. The timing of the annual funding session, however, is expected to allow major donors to announce their contributions.

JIU/REP/98/4 United Nations common services at Geneva - part I: overview of administrative cooperation and coordination

Scope

11. The rationale for the report was as follows. Geneva is currently the largest United Nations system duty station in the world in terms of staff and expenditures. It also happens to be the most expensive of the eight major United Nations system locations with more than 1,000 staff. It is therefore the duty station where it would be most desirable for the Member States to encourage and support efficiency reforms and enhanced inter-secretariat collaboration for more cost-effective methods and vehicles for delivering programmes. However, despite their physical proximity, the Geneva-based secretariats operate very few services in common. No services are shared by the five specialized agencies located in the city and parallel support services exist among United Nations entities governed by the same Charter.

12. The overall picture is one of considerable fragmentation and duplication of overhead structures and costs. This state of affairs appears aggravated by the absence of an intergovernmental consultative or review body to provide strategic direction to all Geneva-based secretariats and entities on administrative and budgetary questions. Additionally, the lack of effective and cohesive institutional leadership of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) common services has weakened its central role in Geneva and deprived it of visibility and identity, leading to its current performance problems.

Recommendations of interest to UNDP

13. The Inspectors recommend: (a) a new framework for United Nations system common services at Geneva; (b) the revitalization of UNOG common services through, among other measures, the establishment of a UNOG common services committee, chaired by the Director-General of UNOG; and (c) that the General Assembly may wish to consider the most effective arrangements for strengthening regular and coherent oversight of Geneva common services.

Comments by UNDP

14. The rationale and thrust of this report are akin to those of the intergovernmental and inter-secretariat discussions on common premises and services at the country level, especially including the United Nations House, as

a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 53/192 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities. The synergies and economies of scale involved in co-location and shared services are well known, however, the institutional constraints, particularly those of the specialized agencies located in Geneva with independent governing bodies and in many cases a long history pre-dating the United Nations, are considerable. However, the pressure from Member States for cost-efficiency and efficiency gains are present in all governing bodies. The establishment of a UNOG common services committee chaired by the Director-General of UNOG and a new framework for common services would be concrete and positive steps towards the goal of expanded and more efficient common services in Geneva. Among concrete measures, UNDP supported, through its participation in CCPOQ and the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ), the now successfully completed co-location of the secretariats of CCPOQ and CCAQ, within the Palais des Nations.

JIU/REP/98/5 United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS): broader engagement with the United Nations system organizations

Scope

15. The objective of this study was to enhance effective cooperation between UNOPS and United Nations system organizations by taking advantage of divisions of labour and complementarities between them for the benefit of programme countries. The report concluded that UNOPS has gained increased recognition for its ability to satisfy the changing demands of its clients and to effectively provide the services needed for the projects it supports. UNOPS generates sufficient income to cover all administrative expenses and maintain an operational reserve for risk management purposes. UNOPS has diversified its client base although the financial value of new client business does not yet constitute a major percentage of UNOPS business activity.

Recommendations of interest to UNDP

16. The Inspectors address recommendations to UNOPS itself, to United Nations organizations and agencies and to the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA. They recommend: (a) the discontinuation of the Management Coordination Committee (MCC), which was part of the transition process of UNOPS to a separate and identifiable United Nations entity; (b) the discontinuation of the Users Advisory Group (UAG), with the same purpose of inter-agency consultation being served by participation of UNOPS in CCPOQ; and (c) the establishment of a distinct segment for UNOPS at the Executive Board meetings. Those three points are noted in a separate report by UNOPS to the Executive Board (DP/1995/25) for Executive Board consideration and decision.

Comments by UNDP

17. UNDP believes that this concise report usefully indicates how UNOPS could engage more broadly with the United Nations system organizations as a service provider. UNDP agrees it is necessary that such an engagement be based on a clear division of labour, taking into account the substantive and other specialized expertise of member organizations. The recommendations addressed to UNOPS in this regard are pertinent and helpful.

18. Regarding the recommendation on MCC, UNDP does not believe that it is correct to characterize MCC as an unnecessary management layer and therefore does not agree that that Committee should be discontinued.

19. The UNDP understanding of the role of MCC is that it acts as a management steering committee for UNOPS operations. This is an important role, given that UNOPS operates in a complex United Nations environment, with several major operational clients, systems and interfaces. But MCC does not set policy or provide intergovernmental guidance to UNOPS. Appropriately, providing that oversight is the role of the Executive Board. The MCC "oversight" role is purely managerial and relates to routine operational matters. Indeed, UNDP considers that MCC has been instrumental in steering the transformation of UNOPS into a separate, service-oriented entity within the United Nations. As the Inspectors themselves acknowledge, this has been a positive development and MCC continues to add value to UNOPS operations in that respect. The Administrator, as Chairperson of MCC, has requested the Secretary-General not to adopt this recommendation which does not reflect the distinct role played by the MCC.

20. Regarding UAG, the Group provides a forum for interaction between UNOPS and its clients and agency partners on specific implementation and other issues for which more general forums such as CCPOQ would be less suited. UAG could be utilized further to provide UNOPS with valuable feedback from its client base. UNDP holds that UAG adds value and therefore suggests that it should not be abolished, as recommended by the JIU report.

21. The Executive Board may wish to consider the recommendation of the establishment of a distinct UNOPS segment at the Executive Board after its consideration of the report by UNOPS on these matters (DP/1999/25).

22. The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report.